



Dead River

Cyn Balog

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My friends and I are spending prom weekend at a remote wooded cabin on the Dead. The Dead River.

I thought it was going to be just us.

I was wrong.

Nothing is what it seems in this creepy paranormal thriller by Cyn Balog.

Dead River Details

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Author : Cyn Balog

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From Reader Review Dead River for online ebook

Emma Lohman says

Pros:

Congratulations on creating the most boring paranormal thriller in existence.

Cons:

The book was slow-paced, lacked definition (and pretty much anything that qualified it as a "thriller"), and had barely any explanation to it.

The cover. When it comes to technology, I have two left hands, but I think I could Photoshop a better cover than that.

I actually had to look back in the book to remember what the main character's name was. I don't think they described her face.

readknitread says

When Ki was 7 her mother committed suicide by walking into a river. Since then her father has kept her away from rivers, lakes, oceans and pools. Basically all bodies of water. Ki doesn't complain because when she is near a river she is haunted by souls of those who died tragically. She thinks she can control her visions when she decides to go rafting down the Dead River. But the Dead river has many secrets and wants Ki as well.

Horribly written book. It is painfully slow and Ki is not a character many will love. She whines constantly about everything. She complains that her boyfriend is uncaring and the most loving in the same breath. She hates nature and wants to go to prom instead. This is something she constantly complains about. The only reason why she goes is because her boyfriend and cousin/best friend have so much in common (guess where this is going) and they both love nature, hiking together, vacation together, raft together and are inseparable. They would feel odd doing one more thing together without Ki.

The story is predictably and fails as horror. By the time the story tries to get interesting with her understanding why she sees ghosts most people will have put the book down.

The book lacks being properly edited. On one page she says she has been with her boyfriend since her junior year. Then in the next chapter complains he should know her better since they've been dating since freshman year.

Vanessa says

I picked this up, thinking it would be a horror novel. And in some ways it was. The creepy imagery is great (Pink dress girl is my favorite), and I loved the fear of the water in the main character, and the reasons for it. Balog's descriptions are fantastic and really draw you in.

It did not, however, end up where I thought it might. The twist was interesting, and it worked. I do wish there had been more explanation of some things, though.

Definitely liked the characters, and enjoyed the story. A quick read, and if you enjoy creepy things, definitely pick it up!

kari says

Spooky and atmospheric. Definitely spine-tingling.

While there were some things I really liked about this book, there are unfortunately as many things that I don't like. That makes reviewing a little tough, so here goes.

The main character, Kiandra's, motivation seems to be all over the place. First, it is all about how scared she is of the river, how she hears voices near the river, how she doesn't want to go rafting, but is doing it anyway because it makes her boyfriend happy (she wanted to go to the prom instead). Then, after a near-death/death experience during which she hallucinates/experiences what's on the other side of the river and is warned several times to stay away from there, she is obsessed and must go back. No, she mustn't. Yes, she must. No, she won't go. Yes, she will. And most of this back and forth takes place in her noggin. So, anyway.

Kiandra seemed a bit self-centered and yet a little bit too self-denying. She can't seem to think beyond what she wants when she wants it, but then she is on a rafting trip she doesn't want to be on but pretends she does while internally whining constantly about it. She has told a whopper of a lie to her father and almost completely forgets him in the space of two days. Oh, yeah, he might be upset if she died. Huh. Imagine that. I think the story simply tried to be too many things in too many directions. There is the teenage love story or rather the story of Justin, Kiandra's boyfriend. Then, there is the rafting/hiking weekend and what occurs with the living teenagers. (view spoiler) There are superfluous characters who seem to exist simply for the needs of the main character. Hugo is a throw-away character as is Spiffy and the twin brothers/rafting business owners sideline, bones found, goes nowhere and is dropped. The evil Jack character just fails to show up at the end. I kept waiting for him to turn up, but nope. Okay, then.

I wish the focus has just been the supernatural stuff. I think that would have made the story better and it sort of rambles back and forth without making much headway. This ghosty person says run away, but this ghosty person says come over here. It's all a bit much and yet a little too little. Too much flitting about with too little movement in the story.

And there is both insta-love and love of a young adult male for a seven year old girl, neither of which I can abide. Yes, the teenager doesn't act on his feelings for the little girl, but it still a big pile of ewwww.

Teenage boys should NOT fall for babies/children. This is simply not a good thing and not a foundation for later romance.

Having said that and putting aside those objections, the ending was lovely and I did buy into that part of the story.

I also liked the stories of those of the other side, the ghost stories. The truth of them was very interesting and I didn't see those things occurring, so well done there. I liked how they all tied in together when I thought they were all separate stories. I did like the lore that the person becomes what they most wished they were while living. That was different and very creative. (view spoiler)

So, middle of the road. I liked the dark tone of the book and it was a good supernatural chiller, but didn't unequivocally love it. It is a like with some reservation. Hope that makes sense.

Jodie says

The cover of Dead River looks freaking awesome! I am a huge fan of ghostly things and in reading the synopsis, I couldn't wait to read it. What I found wasn't exactly what I expected but nonetheless, it was a good read. This is the first book that I've read by Cyn Balog and I'm looking forward to reading more by her.

Having to sneak off from her overprotected father to spend time with her boyfriend Justin and BFF Angela, Kiandra can't wait to get away. What she finds on this trip ends up being incredibly close to what her father had always been so scared about. It wasn't some exciting white water rafting trip. It's a trip that ends up explaining things from the past. Things about her mother, who died suddenly and this has always left Ki curious. This isn't the only thing she finds out. There are secrets happening right behind her back, and with it, comes new beginnings and final endings.

Sarah Whisted says

This book had a richly dark theme that I thoroughly enjoyed. It read the way a really well done Sundance thriller film plays out and for that I loved it. Imagery like a little girl in a pink party dress whose mouth spews a constant flow of mud is disturbingly beautiful to me and, as I'm currently writing a thriller myself, inspiring as well.

If I have one complaint, it's that I wish the story was a little longer. Typically Cyn's ability to write such a great story in so few pages is something I love. I've come to appreciate being able to easily devour a book in a handful of hours in the last year. While this didn't necessarily feel rushed, I would have preferred the end to last a little longer. So that I'm not being spoilery, I'll just say that there are relationships I would have liked to see a little more detail of - between family, friends, and love interests.

I will say, though, that this tale could easily have a sequel and I'm curious if Cyn will pursue it one day. I'd definitely be interested in seeing this Mistress of Waters powers be put to use some more. ;)

E. Anderson says

What's not to love about a good, old-fashioned ghost story? DEAD RIVER by Cyn Balog is certainly spooky, with a protagonist seeing ghosts (and not sure if she might be crazy). But there's a lot more to DEAD RIVER than meets the eye.

On prom weekend, Kiandra, her best friend, and their two dates are going camping instead. If Ki had her way, she'd have a pink dress and a corsage and that magical dance, but she loves her long-time boyfriend and he loves white water rafting. Her dad has always kept her away from the water, ever since her mom died and left them behind. And Ki is starting to wonder if there's a good reason for it. For one thing, the Dead River gives her the creeps. And then there's the fact that her encounters with spirits are getting more and more intense. Suddenly, nothing she knew about her mother is clear, and Kiandra has to wonder about her own destiny, as someone who can see not just spirits, but the spirits of the drowned. Spirits who all seem to have different motives -- and Kiandra can't tell who is telling the truth.

In this supernatural tale of suspense, Cyn Balog constructs an intriguing mythology around the mystery of

the Dead River. With themes of friendship, family, and loyalty -- along with some great scares -- this is one that is sure to find an audience with fans of Nancy Holder's POSSESSIONS series or old school Lois Duncan mysteries.

Gillian says

This book was... interesting. It was short so things happened fast but I think I liked it?

Tez says

CONTENT WARNING: Suicide and suicidal attempts. Grief. Drowning. Murder. I'd forgot this was paranormal, and went in expecting a contemporary thriller. A teen girl hates camping and the outdoors, yet still agrees to go on a white water rafting weekend with her boyfriend, her best friend, and a tag-along. It does not go well. She falls out, drowns, but is rescued by a guy who's...a ghost or something. And there's this other ghost, and it's all very confusing and nonsensical. But the only way the girl can access the ghostworld - namely the ghost of her dead mother - is by drowning. Yes, it gets a bit suicidal. The rafting is interesting, and the grief regarding her mother is relatable, but the paranormal element is a fail, and that epilogue is ugh.

Sara says

Review written for WASHYARG:

Ever since Ki's mother walked into a river and committed suicide, her father has been incredibly over-protective. All kinds of water (rivers, lakes, even swimming pools) are just off limits to Ki, which is why she's incredibly nervous that her boyfriend, Justin, and best friend, Angela, have decided to go white-water rafting on the Dead River instead of going to prom. Ki's not really an outdoorsy girl anyway, so when she starts having visions of strange people no-one else seems to be able to see, all Ki really wants to do is go home to her nice warm bed and running water. It seems, however, that the river has other plans. Though there is a deliciously creepy setting, Balog's novel never really finds its footing, and it teeters on the edge of horror and paranormal romance. Because of this, the book never really finds its audience; it is too scary for paranormal romance fans, and too romantic for horror buffs. Ultimately, the thin character development combined with these factors makes this novel a shrug.

Amy says

Review: Creepy, raw and terrifying. A ghost story that winds you through a ghostly tale of destiny and fighting for where you belong.

Spending a weekend rafting on the Dead River, instead of prom, leaves Kiandra with more to worry about than just hiding the trip's whereabouts from her father. Convincing herself this is just the weekend getaway she needs, ends up turning fatally wrong.

Kiandra has spent her life trying not to think about what goes through a person's mind before they plunge themselves in a river, to never be heard from again. Her life was happy and surreal spending her days on the river as a child fishing in the best spot on the Delaware, until the fateful day her mother waded into the river to end her life. Kiandra's life was uprooted instantly, leaving everything she has behind at a moment's notice, starting a new life away from the water's edge.

Soon she feels the call of the water, pulling her towards it just as it did for her mother. Even with the precautions her father took to protect her, the tragedies that lay in the undercurrent of her family history, has no match for the pull of destiny.

The moment Kiandra arrives at the Dead River the water beacons her, calling to her as if it was a sweet lullaby. Lulling her to be pulled underneath into its angry, unforgiving wrath, spinning promises like a delicate web. Only after it's too late, does she discover that the Dead River is unrelenting and unwavering in its deceit, unable to deliver on its promise.

With Kiandra's freak accident, the Dead River changes everything. Destiny is finally able to present itself, where she can discover who and what is most important in her life as well as the truth behind her mother's suicide.

Constant brushes with death add to the paranormal level of this thriller. Chapter after chapter, life and death resonate through the ghostly beings presented throughout the storyline, with each of their personal stories being brought to life in a captivating way.

This is an amazing ghost story, unlike any other traditional ghost stories that are told. A story that legends are created from, and destined to be campfire stories for years to come. Hang on while the undercurrent catches you unaware through the build up and the twists and turns. For in the end, you will lay there washed up in its wake, amazed at the story that lay before you.

This genre of book is where the author Cyn Balog should have been the whole time. Horror fans, open your door whole heartily and welcome her in, you will not be disappointed.

For more of my reviews please check out my newspaper column For the Love of Books in Dixon's Independent Voice or my facebooks page:<https://www.facebook.com/pages/For-Th...>

Anne says

I am only giving this book two stars because of the cool cover art. However, I couldn't force myself to continue reading another page. The main character was annoying and her friends were predictable cliches of every bad horror movie.

Jo says

4.5 stars

This wasn't the book that I thought I would be reading, but it was written so beautifully, and everything was brought to life that I didn't mind. It was told from first person POV which I love, but Cyn Balog can write

really well in first person. Ki's voice felt genuine and real, and she never said more than what needed to be said. Sometimes you get a writer who rambles in the first person which can be annoying. I felt everything wrapped up nicely so another book is not necessary to feel a sense of completion. Although if there is another book, I would read it in a heartbeat.

I thoroughly enjoyed this and will be picking up other books by Cyn Balog.

Dani Shuping says

I wanted to like this book, I really did. I mean it has such an interesting and different premise, of a young woman that sees visions of dead people anytime she gets close to moving water (like a river), her mother died in a river, and her dad never lets her near a river. And ok the staying in a cabin in the woods, on a river named the Dead River, sounds like a great horror movie setup. But I was extremely disappointed in this book. (Minor spoilers, but nothing earth shattering)

First of all the characters aren't well developed, even our heroine Kiandra, feel like blank shells of people. We don't spend enough to get to know the surrounding characters at all--her dad feels like a paper cutout--and Kiandra herself...there's just nothing about her that stands out. She's wishy washy, changes her mind every five minutes, and doesn't have the ability to stand up for herself. Even the "villains" of the story are never developed. We're told that they're trying to take over the kingdom on the other side of the river where the dead reside, but...why? We're given three or four different reasons, but never hear it from them themselves. And we're told briefly that they did evil things, but honestly it felt like it was something just thrown out there of "oh yeah, by the way that one killed two people, that one killed one. no biggie."

Second, it felt like there was too much story trying to be put into this one book. We've got that she sees dead people, that her mom died and is in charge of some kingdom, other people want to take that kingdom over, and we're wanting to right ancient wrongs or something. I mean seriously in one part of the book they mention bones are found on the river, Kiandra knows who it is, but...it's never mentioned again? Why go through the trouble of setting it up, but not ever confirming it? And the whole plot of being on the other side of the river just felt...weak and undefined. What is the place? Why does it exist? We're given a few sentences of information, but this is supposed to be a major plot point and instead it just goes "poof" we've resolved it?

Lastly, the creepy ass romances. I mean seriously? Kiandra is with her boyfriend, who is her female cousin's bestfriend and these two have known each other since they were 5, and the cousin is Kiandra's bestfriend, who invites another boy along who is seemingly a psychopath in the making. But the cousin and the boyfriend aren't really interested in each other, no....why would they be, even though they like the same things and can finish each others sentences and oppp! Nope, never mind they do like each other! And Kiandra's thing with the ghosts? Two ghosts that died in the 1930's? No, no of course it's not creepy at all of have what amounts to a horny 17 year old ghost who has been around for over 80 years to fall for a 17 year old girl. No...not at all.

OK I get it, I'm probably not the target audience for this book. I think it's geared towards teen girls (maybe?), but I can honestly say that I'd recommend it to anyone. Maybe someone that liked Twilight or similar style of book, but...even then I'd try to point them to something better. 1 out of 5 stars.

Ashley Granger says

The first thing you will want to know about Dead River is the protagonist's name. I don't know if I missed it, but everyone refers to her as "Ki" and it was driving me insane not knowing what her full name was. It's Kiandra. Now for the storyline: Kiandra, her long-term boyfriend Justin, her best friend and cousin Angela, and some annoying guy Hugo all go to Angela's family's cabin at Dead River to go rafting. Kiandra has to lie to her father in order to go as he hates her being anywhere near water since her mother killed herself when she was seven. Once at the cabin, Kiandra realizes that the voices she used to hear as a child have returned once she gets near the river, and she spends a lot of time trying to look like she's not crazy as these whispers fill her head. Soon after arriving, she realizes that her mother's suicide might not have been as black and white as she has seen it, and that the whispers aren't the result of her losing her sanity, but real.

This book had a lot of good points and a lot of bad points. Kiandra hates being outdoors. She wanted to go to prom, but for some reason, could not let her boyfriend of three years know this, so she spends a lot of time internally whining about everything having to do with nature. The first half of the book is repetitive – Kiandra hating being at Dead River, hearing whispers and not knowing what they mean, complaining about being cold, and generally being a total buzzkill. The second half of the book finally introduces the point of the book and the extended plotline, but it's too little, too late. I mean that literally – I was reading and turning pages and realizing there were a lot of unanswered questions and not many pages left. There are some "mysteries" that are brought up, and then never mentioned again. Kiandra finds out certain things about herself, but the descriptions are confusing, and aren't consistent. By the time I was really nearing the end of the book, I was sure there was a sequel. No one likes it when authors unnecessarily draw out a story simply to make it into a trilogy, but this book either needed to be longer, have a sequel, or spend more time on the complex parts and less time on Kiandra being a whiny high school student.

It's a short book and a quick read, so I'm not sure why there are several extraneous characters that don't need to be in the book. One of the characters seems to be a major character with a great mystery, but that just fizzles out and you wonder why he was there in the first place. The climactic scene was also disappointing simply because it wasn't explained. You're left thinking, "Wait...what? Can that happen? I didn't think..." I do think I would recommend this book because it takes a spin on the paranormal that I haven't seen before. Parts of the story are unique, but it's disappointing to see how little elaboration is put into them. I would be interested in reading one of the author's other books to see how the creativity compares to the writing style/plotline development compare to this book. <http://cynbalog.blogspot.com/>
